

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGUI 01566 271251Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PC-10 SCS-03 SCA-01 L-03 H-01

DHA-02 A-01 PA-01 PRS-01 USIE-00 SSO-00 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 INRE-00 SS-15 SY-05 /061 W

-----095568 271254Z /53

O 270940Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8990

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DEPT ALSO PASS PEACE CORPS IMMEDIATE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, PFOR, CT, US

SUBJ: ARREST OF PCV JIM MAHER

1. ABOUT 5 PM ON MONDAY, JULY 25, HEALTH PCV JIM MAHER WAS ARRESTED BY THE IMPERIAL AUTHORITIES OUTSIDE ONE OF THE EMPEROR'S PALACES ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BANGUI. HE WAS OUT FOR A RIDE ON HIS NEW SUZUKI AND STOPPED TO ASK QUESTIONS OF THE GUARDS OUTSIDE THE COMPOUND WALL. HE CONTINUED ON HIS WAY AND ASKED A FEW MORE QUESTIONS ON HIS RETURN. THEY TOOK HIM INTO CUSTODY, CONFISCATED HIS BIKE, AND BROUGHT HIM INTO BANGUI. WE WERE NOT INFORMED OF ANY OF THIS HAPPENING. WHEN PEACE CORPS REALIZED MAHER WAS MISSING THE FOLLOWING DAY, PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR (PCD) WENT BACK ALONG THE RIVER (MAHER HAD TOLD A VOLUNTEER THAT HE WOULD BE HEADING IN THAT DIRECTION) TO SEE WHAT COULD BE FOUND OUT ABOUT HIS DISAPPEARANCE AND WAS TOLD BY A GUARD AT THE PALACE WHEN PCD STOPPED TO ASK IF THEY HAD SEEN AN AMERICAN ON A SUZUKI THE DAY BEFORE THAT HE HAD BEEN ARRESTED. IMMEDIATE CONTACT WAS MADE WITH THE EMBASSY. PCD WOODBURY MET WITH THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AT 6 PM LAST NIGHT WHO IMMEDIATELY TRIED TO CALL THE INTERIOR MINISTER AND HE ASSURED HER THAT HE WOULD KEEP TRYING TO CALL THAT NIGHT, AND WOULD GET BACK TO HER IN THE MORNING. HE SEEMED

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VERY CONCERNED AND COMMENTED THAT IT WAS PROBABLY A MISUNDERSTANDING AND WOULD PROBABLY BLOW OVER. PCVS IN THE CAE HAVE BEEN INFORMED AND ARE BEING ASKED TO TAKE EXTREME CAUTION AT THIS TIME. VOLUNTEER MORALE IS HIGH. NO PRESS COVERAGE AT THIS TIME OF THE EVENT. THE MINISTER OF HEALTH, FORMERLY THE EMPEROR'S PRIVATE PHYSICIAN, SEEMED TO ASSUME FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIS VOLUNTEER AND PEACE CORPS IS AWAITING WORD FROM HIM AS OF 10 AM

LOCAL JULY 27. WE HOPE TO MAKE CONTACT WITH MAHER TODAY TO ASSURE HIM THAT WE KNOW WHERE HE IS AND ARE DOING OUR BEST TO GET HIM RELEASED. WE WILL ALSO TRY AND FIND OUT WHAT HE NEEDS AND GET THINGS TO HIM.

2. CHARGE AND CONSULAR OFFICER VISITED CHEF DE CABINET OF MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND CHEF DE CABINET OF MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AFTERNOON OF JULY 26 TO ALERT THEM TO PROBLEM AND ASK THEIR ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING INFORMATION, ARRANGING ACCESS AND HOPEFULLY IN RELEASING MAHER. BOTH WERE UNAWARE OF DETENTION BUT WERE FRIENDLY AND OFFERED TO BE HELPFUL. CHEF DE CABINET OF FOREIGN MINISTRY REQUESTED DIPLOMATIC NOTE AND WE ARE SENDING ONE THIS MORNING GIVING DETAILS OF DETENTION AND ASKING FOREIGN MINISTRY'S ASSISTANCE IN THE CASE. CONSULAR OFFICER ALSO MADE ROUNDS OF POLICE STATIONS IN UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO FIND MAHER.

3. COMMENT: HEALTH MINISTER SAID THAT INCIDENT HAD PROBABLY OCCURRED BECAUSE OF HEIGHTENED SENSITIVITIES AS A RESULT OF EVENTS OF LAST WEEK. THAT IS PROBABLY AN ACCURATE DESCRIPTION OF WHAT HAPPENED. WHILE WE HAVE NOT GAINED ACCESS TO MAHER, OUR INITIAL RECEPTION BY CAE OFFICIALS WAS MUCH WARMER THAN THAT WHEN WE FIRST SOUGHT INFORMATION ABOUT RANDAL. WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT WITH ASSISTANCE OF HEALTH MINISTER PROBLEM CAN BE RESOLVED QUICKLY AND INFORMALLY.
SMITH

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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